Five Basic Types of Prompts

During instruction, you may need to use prompting to accommodate the needs and abilities of your learners. Prompts cue a learner to display a desired behavior.

VERBAL

Verbal prompts are words, instructions, or questions that direct a learner to engage in a target response. Verbal prompts should be simple and explicit. Verbal prompts will range from saying the entire word or phrase that you are trying to elicit from the learner, to providing only the first sound or syllable to cue the learner.

GESTURAL

Gestural prompts include pointing to, looking at, motioning, or nodding to indicate a correct response. Be careful not to become dependent on gestural prompts when teaching a learner how to interact with a computer.

MODELING

You can act out a target behavior or have the learner's peer act it out to encourage the learner to imitate that behavior. Modeling can be done in full, or the behavior can be partially modeled. Modeling may also include verbal prompts.

POSITIONAL

Positional prompting involves arranging given materials so that the correct item is close to or in front of the learner. For example, if a task consists of picking a picture of an object from a group of three pictures, you might initially arrange them so that the correct choice is directly in front of your learner, while the two incorrect choices are on the other side of the table. As your learner progresses, the other cards can be gradually moved closer until they are even with the correct choice.

PHYSICAL

Tactile prompting involves actually touching the child. A full physical prompt might involve moving the child through the entirety of the behavior i.e. moving his hand to select the right card from an array, and then moving it further to hand the card to you or someone else. A partial physical prompt might be just touching a hand or shoulder to get the child started on the behavior.

* ***It is important to establish a balance when using prompts. The goal is to have your learner complete the task independently and not develop a learned dependency.***